DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 857 CG 014 799

AUTHOR Matthews, Janet R.: Matthews, Lee H.
TITLE A Survey of Dual-Career Couples in Psychology.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association (26th, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, April 10-12, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment): Attitude Measures: Careers: Employment Patterns: Family Problems: *Life Style: National Surveys: *Professional Occupations: *Psychologists: *Sex Differences: Spouses: *Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Dual Careers

ABSTRACT

Both male and female respondents to a survey of dual-career couples in psychology indicated a moderately high degree of satisfaction with their current employment (the majority in academic or applied positions in clinical psychology). Males indicated a higher degree of personal involvement with their job. Neither group felt that their spouse's job interfered with their home life, although some respondents indicated that it was necessary to maintain separate residences for some period of time in order to have meaningful employment. The major area of reported difficulty was time: scheduling difficulties, time conflicts, time demands of employment, and time available for household activities. The majority of respondents reported having married while in graduate school: for such couples in applied clinical psychology or counseling, a joint therapy experience under supervision could prove beneficial. (Author/CS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED194857

A Survey of Dual-Career Couples in Psychology

Janet R. Matthews

Creighton University

Lee H. Matthews

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Paper read at the Southwestern Psychological Association
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
April, 1980

CG 014799

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Janet R. Matthews

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The reality of the dual-career couple has been apparent for many years. Attention to special issues relating to the dual-career couple, however, appears to have increased in recent years. Reports have included consideration of self-esteem (Birnbaum, 1975), job-seeking behavior (Madell & Madell, 1979; Matthews & Matthews, 1978; Walston, Foster, & Berger, 1978), and interactive patterns (Garland, 1972) to name just a few. Issues related to dual-career couples in which both members are psychologists were addressed in the Bryson & Licht (Bryson, Bryson, Licht, & Licht, 1976) 1973 survey. Such topics as patterns of employment, productivity, constraints on professional development, and job satisfaction were considered in a sample of 200 such couples compared to a control sample of APA members. Another sample of psychologist couples, obtained from the list of those receiving husband/wife credit for APA membership was composed of 196 couples (Bryson, Bryson, & Johnson, 1978). This investigation considered such factors as domestic satisfaction, job satisfaction, & professional productivity. In an attempt to add to this growing body of literature, the current survey was undertaken.

Method

Subjects

The initial pool of subjects was obtained from the 1978 APA Biographical Directory plus our acquaintances. The cover letter requested that if the respondent was aware of additional dual-career couples within psychology to please send us their names. We indicated that we were particularly interested in couples where the wife did not adopt the husband's name as such couples would not be evident from the Directory. Several of our respondents did supply additional names with one couple providing several pages of such couples. Dual-career couples were identified in 46 of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia. A total of 503 such couples were contacted with a 54.1% return rate for the survey. In order to encourage responding, we used an anonymous format. Thus, it wasn't possible for us to contact those subjects who had not returned the

questionnaire. While we might have recontacted all subjects with a request that if they had not returned the questionnaire we would ask that they do so, we were conducting nonfunded research and the postage would have been prohibitive. We felt that with a return rate of over 50%, we had reasonable data.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire contained one page of general items to be answered jointly or by either partner, a separate page for the female partner, and an identical page for the male partner. General questions covered basic information about the couple including the age of each, length of marriage, number of children, and place of residence. Also included were items related to joint professional activity. The page to be completed individually by the male and female member consisted of 14 items to be rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The items rated included job satisfaction, social issues, interrelationship of job and home, and potential for job change. Additional items considered areas of specialization within psychology, work status, type of employment, a ranking of factors of potential importance in considering a job change, type of problems (if any) encountered in interviewing or working together, and several open-ended items on the advantages and disadvantages of being a dual-career couple within psychology.

Results

The median age of the female respondents was 39 years, with a range of 27 to 73 years. For the males, the median age was 42 years with a range of 26 to 75 years. In the majority of cases the husband was older than the wife, with an average age difference in the 1 to 3 year range. The typical couple reported having been married while in graduate school and currently being married for more than 10 years. Although some respondents reported having only

a master's degree, 83.7% of the respondents indicated that both members of the dual-career couple were doctoral level. In 57.9% of the cases, the male had received the terminal degree prior to the female and in 59.5% of the cases the male had obtained the current employment first.

In 95.2% of the cases considered, both members were employed, with 58.7% of them working at the same facility. The most commonly reported joint professional activity (87.2%) was attendance at professional meetings. While the majority of couples responding engaged in, or had engaged in, a number of additional joint professional activities, such activities weren't as frequent as convention attendance. Joint professional activities reported by more than half of the sample included: joint research, 55.1%; joint professional practice, 56.6%; jointly authored paper(s), 60.9%; and jointly authored publication, 57.8%.

In the area of domestic concerns, 73.7% of the respondents indicated that they had children, while 77.4% indicated that they had no future plans for having children. Since age could be a factor here, we asked whether the dual-career status had influenced the decision regarding children. For 57.1% of the respondents, their dual-career status was not related to their decision regarding children. When consideration was given to sharing domestic tasks, the type of task involved appeared to be a critical variable. For 88.1% of the respondents, it was reported that each member regularly did some part of the housework. This can be contrasted to the report that only 58.4% indicated that each member regularly did grocery shopping.

The size of home community for our subjects was rather evenly divided between large cities (250,000 or more) and small cities, with 42.5% declaring the former and 45.1% the latter. The remaining 12.4% indicated that their place of residence was rural.

The remainder of the survey results were taken from the data forms which were answered individually by the male and female respondents. The specialty within psychology most frequently indicated by each group was clinical psychology with 50.2% of the males and 52.8% of the females listing that as their area of specialization. Among the females, the only other specialty indicated by 10% or more of the respondents was developmental psychology. Among the males, no other specialty was indicated by as many as 10% of the sample.

The general employment status varied considerably when the male & female respondents were compared. Although 94.8% of the males were employed in a full-time capacity, only 72.6% of the females were so employed. This employment level was the choice of 77.6% of the females and 86.2% of the males. The division of academic versus applied positions was about equal for the males (51.7% academic; 48.3% applied). For the females, the majority indicated applied positions (41.0% academic; 59.0% applied). This difference appeared to be related to nepotism rules in many cases. Only a small percentage of the respondents indicated being employed by a federal agency (6.4% of the males; 5.1% of the females). The breakdown between state and private employment was similar for males and females with about 50% of the sample being state-employed.

On the five-point Likert scale, both male and female respondents indicated a moderately high degree (median=4) of satisfaction with their current employment. They differed, however, on reported degree of personal involvement with their job. The males indicated a higher degree of personal involvement with their job (median=5) than did the females (median=4). Neither group, however, supported the position of keeping work life and home life as separate as possible. The males, on the average, disagreed with the position that their jobs interfered with their home life, while the females neither agreed nor disagreed with it.

Neither group felt that their spouse's job interfered with their home life. The typical respondent to the survey seemed reasonably settled in the current place of employment.

Several items considered the relationship between job setting and social life. It appeared that while some social contacts do arise within the employment setting, our respondents also had social involvement unrelated to their jobs. Both males and females indicated an active social life.

A number of factors may be considered when a dual-career couple plan a job change. Table 1 presents eight such factors. The most important factor for the females was that both members have a job. For the males, equivalent median rankings were given for that item and their own job. These were based on rankings of the items presented in the table. The least important factor for both was working at the same facility.

Table 2 presents interview and joint employment issues potentially facing dual-career couples. Females tended to report these problems more often than males. The data obtained in this survey do not provide an explanation of these differences. Further investigation is needed in this area.

A variety of responses were given to advantages of being a dual-career couple within psychology. The most prevalent involved having common interests and/or goals. Another closely related advantage involved increased intracouple communication. Such communication was also related to increased professional stimulation. Our respondents indicated that there was an advantage of having the salaries of two professionals as well.

The major area of reported difficulties for these dual-career couples involved time problems. These problems included scheduling difficulties, time demands of employment, time conflicts, and decreased amounts of time available

for household activities. Another frequently reported problem involved finding two appropriate jobs in the same geographic region. Some respondents indicated the necessity to maintain separate residences during the week or for some period of time in order to have meaningful employment. There were also reports of professional rivalry within some couples.

A number of interesting anecdotes were provided by our respondents. I wish time were available for me to share some of them with you. In preparing this presentation, we decided that it would be best, however, if we covered the raw data in summary form rather than deal with other material.

Implications

The high percentage of our sample indicating joint attendance at professional meetings has definite implications for activities at such meetings. A sharing of ideas and problems which are unique to the dual-career couple appears to be warranted. Since some of the couples indicated that getting to know other dual-career couples had proved useful to them, a discussion session might prove to be appreciated.

Since the majority of our respondents reported having been married while in graduate school, there are also implications for graduate training faculty. In some training facilities, there is a tendency toward special efforts to keep such couples from working together since "they might depend on each other too much." A continuation of this attitude was seen in our respondents' reports of not being viewed as independent professionals by some colleagues. While it is important for each member to develop separate skills, it is also a reality that they may do some work together after completing their education. For those in the applied areas such as clinical or counseling, some joint therapy experience under supervision could prove beneficial.

Many other areas of interest to the functioning of the dual-career couple can be considered. This study was intended as a beginning. Hopefully, others will add to it.

References

Birnbaum, J. A. Life patterns and self-esteem in gifted family-oriented and career oriented women. In M. T. S. Mednick, S. S. Tangri, & L. W. Hoffman (Eds.) Women and achievement: Social and motivational analysis. New York: Halstead Press, 1975.

Bryson, R., Bryson, J. B., & Johnson, M. F. Family size, satisfaction, and productivity in dual-career couples. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1978, 3, 67-78.

Bryson, R. B., Bryson, J. B., Licht, M. H., & Licht, B. G. The professional pair: Husband and wife psychologists. American Psychologist, 1976, 31, 10-16.

Garland, N. F. The better half? The male in the dual-profession family. In C. Safilios-Rothschild (Ed.) Toward a sociology of women. Lexington, Mass.: Xerox College Publishing, 1972.

Madell, T. O., & Madell, C. M. A professional pair at the job market: A reply. American Psychologist, 1979, 34, 275-276.

Matthews, J. R., & Matthews, L. H. A professional pair at the job market. American Psychologist, 1978, 33, 780-782.

Wallston, B. S., Foster, M. A., & Berger, M. I will follow him: Myth, reality, or forced choice--job-seaking experiences of dual-career couples. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1978, 3, 9-22.

A Survey of Dual-Career Couples in Psychology

Janet R. Matthews & Lee H. Matthews

Table 1

Job Change Factors for Females (F) and Males (M)

	Median Rank	
	F	M
My job offer (type of job)	3	2
My spouse's job offer (type of job)	3	4
That we both have job offers	2	2
Geographic location of the proposed job(s)	3	4
My salary	6	6
My spouse's salary	6	6
Combined family salary	4	4
That we work at the same place	8	8

Table 2

Interview and Joint Employment Issues

	Female	Male
Nepotism rules	43.4%	40.8%
Lower combined salary than two comparable independent professionals	29.8%	15.5%
Not being treated as two independent professionals	35.8%	24.9%
Employer taking attitude of "doing you a favor"	23.6%	16.9%
One member essentially ignored during the interview	14.6%	11.7%
One of the two positions really below your qualifications	17.5%	15.5%